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ABSTRACT

This conference report presents an executive summary of a 1976-77 study on external degree programs conducted by the Bureau of Social Science Research in cooperation with the American Council on Education, the keynote address, summaries of panel commentaries on research implications and policy implications, and a conference summary. The federally-funded study was designed to examine the extent to which external degrees are transferable to subsequent educational programs and are negotiable in the world of work. The study focuses on the benefits of the degree as a credential and does not examine curriculum issues or learning achievements. It is the first national survey of external degree programs and the experiences of their graduates. The executive summary, by Carol Sosdian and Laure Sharp, describes the study design. The study consisted of two large-scale surveys of institutions and of graduates. Two small-scale research efforts explored likely employers of external degree holders and the experiences of external degree holders as compared to traditional degree holders who attended the same institution. The keynote address by Naomi E. S. McIntosh entitled, "Development and Diversification in Post-School Education: A View From Across the Atlantic," considers the development and significance of external degree programs from an international context. Six commentaries on research implications and six commentaries on policy implications are included, and a conference summary by Francis O. Macy is provided. (SW)

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External Degree Programs in the United States: Research and Policy Implications

Edited by
Eugene J. Sullivan

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PREFACE

One of the most recent innovations in higher education is the external degree option, which provides individuals with the opportunity to complete degree programs with only a minimum amount of time spent on-campus. Credit is granted for prior documentable learning obtained through a variety of sources (e.g., work experience, life experience, and courses completed in noncollegiate institutions and organizations such as the military and industry) and self-directed study is emphasized.

Most external degree programs were introduced after 1972, and their worth and comparability to traditional degree programs have been questioned by many. In 1976-77 the Bureau of Social Science Research (BSSR), in cooperation with the American Council on Education (ACE), conducted a study of graduates. The study, funded by the National Institute of Education (NIE), was designed to examine the extent to which external degrees are transferable to subsequent educational programs and are negotiable in the world of work.

Although the study focuses on the benefits of the degree as a credential and deliberately does not examine curriculum issues or learning achievements, it does represent the first national survey of external degree programs and the experiences of their graduates.

The results of the study were first presented at the Stouffer's National Center Hotel in Crystal City, Virginia on April 25, 1978. The keynote address by Naomi E.S. McIntosh of the British Open University and summaries of panel commentaries are contained in this report. Also included is an executive summary of the study itself.

Special note should be made of valuable advice and support provided by the Advisory Panel. Ms. Naomi E.S. McIntosh, Pro Vice Chancellor at the British Open University, Chairman; Dr. Grover Andrews, Associate Executive Secretary of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges; Dr. Sanford Elberg, Dean of the Graduate School, University of California at Berkeley; Dr. Douglas Connor, Executive Director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers; Dr. Donald Nolan, Director of the New York Regents External Degree Program at the University of the State of New York; Mr. Hugh Wallace of the Bureau of Recruiting and Examining at the U. S. Civil Service Commission; Dr. Herman Smith, Jr., Chancellor, University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff; and Mr. C. A. Francke, Director of Educational Systems and Program Services at the General Motors Corporation.

ACE has an active interest and role in evaluating learning and extending nontraditional or extrainstitutional opportunities for the individual learner. It believes that postsecondary institutions legally authorized and accredited to award degrees and other educational credentials have a special responsibility to assess extrainstitutional learning as part of their credentialing function. Moreover, it is possible, although perhaps difficult, to have flexible degree programs which are responsive to a variety of individual needs and which also meet educational standards. This report is intended to serve this end by increasing the understanding of one aspect of nontraditional education.

Eugene J. Sullivan
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Carol P. Sosdian and Laure M. Sharp

This report summarizes the results of a research project on external degree programs and selected experiences of graduates completing those programs. The project was carried out by the Bureau of Social Science Research (BSSR) in 1976-77 in cooperation with the American Council on Education and was sponsored by the National Institute of Education.

External degree programs (EDPs) are an education innovation that received considerable attention in recent years because they seemed to offer a useful option for adult degree seekers. Such degree programs comprise only a small segment of the broad range of nontraditional higher education programs. Much controversy and uncertainty have surrounded this degree option, and the equivalence of external and traditional degrees frequently has been questioned. The purpose of this project was to examine the extent to which external degrees satisfy entrance requirements to subsequent education programs and yield job-related benefits. Another purpose was to address the issue of external degree equivalence.

The study objectives were narrowly focused on the utility of the degree as a credential and intentionally did not address such issues as EDP curricula and instruction practices or assess learning outcomes.

The study design called for two large-scale surveys:

- of institutions to document the universe of external degree programs and to gather a limited set of data on the characteristics of programs, students, and graduates;
- of graduates to gather in-depth information about their postdegree experiences and their assessments of the acceptability and negotiability of this credential.

Carol P. Sosdian, formerly research analyst, Bureau of Social Science Research, Washington, D. C., is now research associate, Westat Research, Rockville, Maryland. Laure M. Sharp is research associate, Bureau of Social Science Research, Washington, D. C.

In addition, two small-scale research efforts were carried out:

- A small, exploratory survey of likely employers of external degree holders;
- A comparative analysis of the experiences of a small group of external and traditional degree holders who attended the same institution.

The study examined only holders of associate and baccalaureate degrees or situations potentially relevant to degree holders at those levels. External degree programs were defined as those which were primarily nonresidential and nonclassroom in nature. Programs included in the universe were only those that did not require more than 24 percent of the student's total degree work in the form of campus-based, classroom instruction.

The Survey of Institutions

At the start of the survey, 183 institutions were identified as having programs that appeared to satisfy the project's definition of external degree program. Through telephone screening, this number was reduced to 134.

As of 1976, these 134 institutions offered 178 bachelor and 66 associate degree programs; slightly more than fifty-four thousand students were enrolled in these programs as of fall of that year.

Most of the 134 institutions that sponsored EDPs were traditional colleges or universities founded for traditional educational purposes (84 percent). The remaining 16 percent were "free-standing" institutions, founded expressly to offer external degree programs.

Very nearly all of the institutions sponsoring EDPs were regionally accredited. Even if all institutions that did not furnish this information are classified as unaccredited, 90 percent of the sponsoring institutions were regionally accredited.

Although there were others, the four areas of study most commonly offered under these degrees were general or liberal studies, applied social sciences, business or public administration, and individualized (self-designed) studies.

While EDPs have been available since the early 1960s, three-quarters were established since 1972. By September 1976, they had graduated 18,421 students, three-quarters receiving bachelor degrees and one-quarter, associate degrees. Most of these degrees are relatively recent; over two-fifths of the total graduates (42 percent) received their degrees between September 1975 and August 1976.

The majority of the associate degree program areas (69 percent) required a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma (GED) for admission, yet about one-third (31 percent) had no fixed minimum education requirement. At the bachelor level, over one-half (55 percent) required a high school diploma or GED for admission; 18 percent required one to two years of college; and one-fourth had no fixed minimum.

In both the associate and the bachelor's programs, the majority of the program areas (61 percent) used the traditional A-F grading procedure. A fifth of the associate and a tenth (11 percent) of the baccalaureate programs used credit/no credit grading systems. A tenth of the associate and baccalaureate program areas used evaluation procedures agreed upon by a student and a faculty/advisory staff member to grade.

While the amount of prior learning the EDP would recognize for degree credit varied, for most EDPs (75 percent), prior learning could account for 71 to 100 percent of a student's degree requirements. For associate programs, 65 percent was allowed on the average;for baccalaureate programs, the average was 73 percent. The majority of programs required most of these prior learning experiences to be in the form of college credits earned in other programs. Credit for experiential learning (i.e., learning based on work or life experiences) was limited to 25 percent of all credits for associate programs and up to 44 percent for baccalaureate programs.

For the programs covered in the study, on the average, the minimum number of days required in campus-based classroom study at the associate level was thirty-three and at the baccalaureate level, the number was twenty-four.

This survey of institutions suggested that external degree programs as defined by this study do not account for a significant part of enrollment in American postsecondary institutions. Predominantly, these programs are offered in regionally accredited institutions.

While they require minimal classroom attendance and also enable students to obtain considerable credit for earlier learning, most EDPs require much of the earlier learning to have taken place in an academic setting. Relatively few programs give academic credentials and academic recognition to areas of study essentially vocational in nature. They had fairly conventional admission, grading, and examination systems. Finally, the consolidation of students' previous, often formal, but fragmented educational experiences was an important feature and attraction of many of these programs.

The Survey of Graduates

For this survey, a sample of 3,499 graduates from EDP sponsoring institutions was drawn. A mail questionnaire was sent to each graduate, and 1,486 usable completions were received and processed. The response rate, adjusted for deceased graduates, bad addresses, etc., was 56 percent.

A follow-up study of nonrespondents was carried out to check for bias in the data. Results suggested that the rate of nondelivery (which contributed heavily to the nonresponse rate) due to bad addresses and inappropriate postal service handling was higher than originally assumed, and that the actual survey response rate was probably in excess of 67 percent.

While our primary attention was focused on graduates' experiences with the acceptability and negotiability of EDPs, we felt that these experiences could best be assessed if they were interpreted in accordance with graduates' personal characteristics as well as their goals or reasons for obtaining the degree. We therefore designed the questionnaire to cover these areas.

The "typical" external degree graduate who responded to the survey was a white male in his mid-thirties who was married and had children. On the average, this "typical" graduate was employed in a professional, sub-professional, or technical support position and earned about $15,000 annually. Associate graduates tended to be younger than others, employed at lower levels, and had lower incomes. Women graduates were less likely to be married than the "typical" graduate (although the majority of women in this survey were married) and were less likely to be working, although the majority worked at the time of the survey.

External degree graduates were not newcomers to postsecondary education. Prior to pursuing their EDPs, 75 percent had been previously enrolled in a traditional associate or baccalaureate program which they did not complete. Fifteen percent of the associate graduates had previously completed a college degree at some level, and 35 percent of the bachelor graduates had done so.

As would have been expected of persons who chose to complete a college degree after the age of thirty, graduates seemed very clear about their reasons for pursuing this study program. One reason was the possible job-related benefits which might result (such as a pay increase or increased job responsibilities). Another was that the degree could lead to further education. Another reason was the personal satisfaction of obtaining a college degree.

However, only a few graduates saw their external degree as a means for developing a "brand new" career or for qualifying for a professional license of some kind.

When graduates were asked to choose the one most important benefit from obtaining this degree, responses differed according to degree level. About half the associate program graduates chose "having the degree as a stepping stone to go on for more education or training," but there was a split for baccalaureate program graduates. About one-third of them checked "having the degree as a credential towards job opportunities I might not otherwise have had," and about the same proportion checked the education "stepping stone" benefit.

Graduates were also asked to compare the value of their external degree with that of a traditional degree, not only in their own eyes but also in the eyes of others. Only a small minority of the respondents --8 percent-- said they felt their external degree was less valuable. Furthermore, only slightly

more graduates (ranging from 8 to 15 percent) said they thought their spouses, relatives, friends, employers, or co-workers would rate their external degree as less valuable.

The World of Work

Although the study gathered considerable information about how graduates felt about the jobs they had held (or had not held) while enrolled and, then, after completing the degree, the central question was what kinds of changes in graduates' work lives had occurred as a result of completing the degree. How did these changes--or lack thereof--compare with graduates' earlier expectations?

More than four out of ten graduates who responded said that some kind of positive change in their work lives had occurred as a result of completing their degree. The five changes asked about in the questionnaire were: changing to a different job (46 percent "yes" responses); receiving a promotion or increase in pay or benefits (55 percent "yes" responses); receiving an increase in job responsibilities (59 percent "yes" responses); an increase in job security (46 percent "yes" responses); or an increase in status or respect from their employer or co-workers (72 percent "yes" responses). Furthermore, a maximum of 15 percent of the graduates who responded indicated that they had expected some change that had not happened. In general, associate graduates experienced job changes less often than did baccalaureate graduates, but this outcome was in line with associate degree holders' expectations. Women graduates experienced job changes more frequently than men.

By the time of the survey, the majority of external degree graduates had already taken steps towards continuing their education. Fifty-seven percent

had applied for admission to other programs, and of those applying, 93 percent had been admitted, 88 percent had enrolled, and 63 percent had completed the next program.

These high rates of admission prompted further examination of the kinds of programs and institutions to which these graduates had applied, in particular, their selectivity and the extent to which these were the same institutions that had awarded the external degrees. According to graduates' responses, about one-third of those who applied to continue their studies applied to their EDP alma mater, but acceptance was only slightly more likely for these people (about 4 percentage points higher). Generally, EDP graduates applied and gained admission into institutions of about average selectivity--neither extremely difficult nor totally unselective.

To gain some insight into how EDP degree holders compared with traditional degree holders from the same institution, but from two different programs within that institution, we examined application/admissions experiences of selected graduates from Florida International University. Although the data set was small and prevented drawing firm conclusions, indications were that admissions rates and selectivity were about the same for both EDP and traditional graduates of FIU's programs. Admissions and selectivity patterns for these two groups of graduates greatly resembled those seen among EDP graduates who reported in the larger study.

One out of every ten external degree holders continuing their education told of having had some kind of difficulty applying to and enrolling in other higher education institutions. Lack of regional accreditation and nontraditional transcripts appeared most troublesome (where applicable), and compensations commonly required of applicants were additional letters of reference,

academic probationary periods, and personal interviews not required of other (traditional) applicants.

Finally, the survey explored the reasons of those EDP graduates who chose not to continue their education. The most common responses were not having enough time for both work and school, financial problems, deciding there was no need or real desire to go on at that time, and needing to care for home and family. Notably, few nonapplicants (2 percent) reported that they felt their external degree would not have gained them admission into a more advanced program.

Objectives Achieved

From all the data gathered in this survey, we had little difficulty concluding that these graduates felt well served by their external degrees. Most of them chose this study option because they sought a way of consolidating and supplementing earlier study experiences without sacrificing work and family responsibilities. Although career-related objectives were a central concern for these degree seekers, of almost equal importance were the quests for personal satisfaction and stimulation and the achievement of further educational objectives. These objective were achieved by most of those who completed their studies: although job-related benefits occurred for the majority of the external degree holders, the satisfaction of having the degree and the access it gave to further study ranked very high among benefits graduates realized.

Although our findings pointed clearly to the usefulness of this degree and showed that those who completed their program were well satisfied with their experiences, our study did not "prove" that the external degree is an education panacea. We studied the experiences of graduates--not those who may have enrolled in an EDP but did not finish the degree. Furthermore, we saw that degree

completers were, by and large, a comfortably situated group of men and women with considerable educational and personal preparation (especially maturity) for their educational undertaking. Considering graduates' reports, it appears that strong positive outcomes from such programs are likely to occur for such persons.

Employers and the External Degree

To supplement the self-reported information from the survey of graduates about the utility of the external degree in the world of work, we conducted a small survey of likely employers of EDP graduates to investigate how their hiring or promotion policies might relate to these degrees. We constructed a set of hiring and promotion policy statements and had employers rate each of the statements in terms of how closely each mirrored their organization's practices.

In general, things related to education were not at the top of the list of factors important for hiring and promotion. Rather, most important were individual and personality characteristics of the candidate, along with previous relevant job experience. Education was seen as highly desirable "ground level" preparation for hiring or promotion, but it was not thought of as sufficient to qualify a candidate.

However, the results of this small survey did suggest that the external degree might benefit the recipient by satisfying employers' general, broad bias in favor or "more education". The external degree might boost a career in just the same manner as might a traditional college degree.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Naomi E.S. McIntosh

Development and Diversification in Post-School Education: A View From Across the Atlantic

Preamble

My task in this keynote address is to endeavor to place the development and significance of external degree programs, the subject of these studies and today's conference, in an international context on which attention has increasingly focussed over the last decade in the provision of nontraditional forms of educational opportunity, particularly for adults. Although countries and international organizations differ in their choice of names for their movement--the European terms for "lifelong learning" include "recurrent education" (OECD), "education permanente" (Council of Europe) and increasingly, particularly in Great Britain, "continuing education" -- its objects and direction are clearly the same. Such experiments as the Open University in the United Kingdom, Everyman's University in Israel, the Fernuniversitat in Hagen, West Germany, the Free University of Iran, the University Without Walls, and Empire State University are all a part, but only a relatively small part, of this larger phenomenon. However, the motives for developments in different countries are varied, and are inevitably affected by their social, political, and economic environments. Some countries have already built up well-developed systems of provision for post-school education for large proportions of their population: America and Sweden are two such examples. Other countries such as Great Britain continue to maintain relatively elitist systems for small proportions of the age group.

Major problems arise in other countries such as Germany, where students with appropriate qualifications have a legal right to study but where there is inadequate provision of places, particularly in some subject areas, to meet all the demand thus generated.

A Framework for Analysis

This paper suggests a simple but useful organizing framework which can assist in the understanding and analysis of these developments, their objectives, the motivations underlying them and ultimately, therefore, the evaluation of their success. The model is not a new one -- I found it useful when teaching marketing in the late '60's -- but it is new to education, and I am indebted to H. Igor Ansoff for it.[1] It arises from a discussion of the "growth" vector as a component of corporate strategy, and relates to product innovation and diversification. A company has, effectively, only four options in pursuit of growth: it can sell more of its existing products to existing markets or more of its existing products to new markets, develop new products for existing markets, or develop new products for new markets. (Figure 1)

FIGURE 1 The growth component in corporate strategy

Mission \ Product	Present	New
Present	Existing products Existing markets (Market penetration)	New products Existing markets (Product development)
New	Existing products New markets (Market development)	New products New markets (Diversification)

1. H. Ignor Ansoff, Corporate Strategy (McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 109.

Early on in the life of the Open University, I tried out this model on the educational system in the U.K. at that time to see where the Open University as a development fitted in to it.[2] (Figure 2)

FIGURE 2 Higher education in the UK in the late 1960's

Mission \ Product	Present	New
Present	Existing institutions catering for existing student population eg. Oxbridge/red-brick Universities	New institutions catering for existing student population eg. Polytechnics
New	Existing institutions catering for new student populations eg. Sussex - early school leavers scheme	New institutions catering for new student populations eg. The Open University

Until the late sixties, the needs of the conventionally qualified group of eighteen to 21-year-old students were met through conventional universities: Oxford and Cambridge and the well established "red-brick" universities. To these had been added several new universities as a result of the post-Robbins expansion, but their mission was definitely to provide opportunities for "more of the same" students. Even the development of the polytechnics, the so-called binary system, was not designed with the objective of getting to new, "different" students. Until the setting up of the Open University in 1969 it was left to a

2. N.E. McIntosh, "Response to the Open University: Continuity and Discontinuity," Higher Education, Vol, 2, No. 2, March 1973.

small number of existing universities such as Sussex to extend their mission by admitting mature or unqualified entrants. The OU was set up specifically in order to diversify and reach this new clientele which would be mature and could be unqualified. It was also expected to reach more of the educationally disadvantaged groups, e.g., women and the working class. How far it has succeeded in doing this has been documented elsewhere.[3] But the decision to diversify and set up a new institution was a peculiarly British one, and was affected by the social, political and educational environment in the country at that time.

Only in certain situations is the decision to diversify the correct one. It will depend on such things as the existing educational investment in the country, possible competition and the potential market. Sometimes it may be more important to use existing educational plants better rather than set up new institutions. In a country such as the US, where the existing investment in higher education in terms of money, people and plant is already much greater, although the ideas which the Open University embodies are seen as vital, the ways in which these ideas should be implemented are likely to be different. It is less a question of any or some new institutions being set up, but rather of reaching new students in new ways.

New Technologies

The OU has attempted to reach new students by using a varied mix of old and new technologies, but it is possible to reach new students in much simpler ways. Let us develop the matrix into a third dimension: the ways in which students can study.

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3. N.E. McIntosh and A. Woodley, "Excellence, Equality and the Open University." (Paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Higher Education, Lancaster University, September 1975) The Open University.

FIGURE 3 Type of students and ways of study

Ways \ Students	Present	New
Present	Existing students Existing ways	New students Existing ways
New	Existing students New ways	New students New ways

Much recent pressure both in the US and in Sweden, for example, and increasingly in Britain, has been towards development in the upper right quadrant: to reach more new groups of students but in existing ways. The pressures for this are powerful but stem from a variety of motives, some more laudable than others. It is possible to distinguish at least three motives at work: the social, egalitarian one of extending educational opportunities to minority groups; the need or desire to use existing resources better; and finally, what is increasingly being described as the "effect of demography." The first of these motives has until recently been the dominant one, particularly in the US, but increasingly, given the tighter economic climate of the 1970's over the whole Western world, the second has also become important. Money simply is not going to be available for continued educational expansion on the scale it appeared to be heretofore, and it has become clear that in many countries social goals can only be achieved through reasonably cost-effective measures. The third factor -- "the effect of demography" -- has hit the US just a year or so earlier than it has hit the UK, for example. There is no present sign of any upturn in the birth rate, which in many countries has declined relentlessly since the early 1960's. The effect of this decline on educational systems where there is a vast financial investment locked up in plant and in tenured staff is

major. Inevitably existing institutions are going to try extremely hard to get "new students" to study in existing ways in order to survive. It is no accident that the "Model E" outlined by the Department of Education and Science, which looks to an extension of access both for the children of "manual workers" and for mature students, is being seized on by a number of conventional institutions in the UK as the "universal panacea" for their problems at the time of demographic decline in the 1990's.[4] It was evident from Sam Phillips' introductory paper[5] to the first meeting of this study's Advisory Body, that the effect of demography was also a preoccupation of N.I.E. at that time.

Whereas the US has been more preoccupied with the upper right quadrant (Figure 3), it is illuminating for this analysis to see that many other countries are more concerned with the lower left quadrant. In such diverse countries as Germany, Holland, and Iran, there are large numbers of existing students, i.e., of the normal age group and with appropriate qualifications for whom there are not enough places in existing institutions. These countries wish to use new ways to meet the needs of existing students. The motivation to utilize new ways is therefore varied. They may enable institutions to reach more students numerically, or more cheaply, or again more effectively. Indeed it is sometimes important to use new ways, e.g., television or satellites, not

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4. Higher Education into the 1990s: A Discussion Document, Department of Education and Science and the Scottish Education Department (HMSO, February 1978).

5. S. Phillips, "Comments for Review Panel on Acceptability/Negotiability of External Degrees," (Meeting of Advisory Panel 15-16 November 1976, Washington, D. C.).

because they are cheaper or more effective, but because they can reach students who could not be reached in any other way. But the new ways need in some respect or an other to be "better" in order to be justified. The Fernuniversitat in Hagan is designed, for example, to provide degree-level education more cheaply, but to those traditionally qualified and admitted through the state's conventional admissions procedure. The Free University of Iran is also accepting traditionally qualified students, but ones who live in areas where there has not been a local university, and only in a limited number of subject areas for which there is national need for provision.

It is the final quadrant of this matrix which houses both the Open University, and also, it is hypothesized, the subject of this study. However, the objectives of the fourth quadrant can be achieved either through an existing institution or by setting up a new institution. Decisions here are likely to be affected by the existing investment in education, and by educational politics, since to set up a new institution implies competition with existing institutions and for existing resources.

The Satellite-Technology Demonstration: A Particular Case

We can, by switching another variable, relate the analysis to a relevant American experiment, the Satellite-Technology Demonstration carried out by the Federation of Rocky Mountain States. As its name implies, its purpose was to demonstrate the capacity of Satellite Technology, and it was to be used in that region to beam out educational programs. The main rationale for this was <u>not</u> that the satellite would do it better or more cheaply but that it would be able to get to people who could not be got to in other ways, in this instance because

of the geographical conditions of the Rocky Mountains. The interest from the point of view of this analysis is that there was an initial decision, with a combination of educational and political inputs, that the educational programs that would be beamed out from the satellite would be new programs, specially designed, and would be in the area of "career development," that the target audience would be particular grades in high schools and their teachers. (The original plan for a second program component in child development was dropped.) Of course, there are existing courses in career development for schools already going out on public television (i.e., in existing ways). So how does the Satellite Demonstration fit into the matrix?

FIGURE 4 The Satellite-Technology Demonstration (1974-75)

Courses / Ways	Present	New
Present	Existing courses Existing ways	New courses Existing ways
New	Existing courses New ways	New courses New ways

The main objective (written into the initial funding) located the project in the lower right quadrant -- it was designed to beam out new courses in a new way. It had to build up its own course component in career development and then send it out by satellite. Is this the only thing it did? No, it was also operating in the upper right quadrant. It also put out career development programs, i.e., new courses, but it linked them in through the satellite terminals onto public broadcasting systems or through cable networks -- so it also put out new courses in existing ways. One suggestion that was not pursued at that time was that they should put out existing "information" in "new" ways; for

example, current weather and road reports could also be put out through the satellite network. Another possibility would have been to put out existing series such as Electric Company or Sesame Street via the satellite, so that the programs got to people in isolated geographic areas who could not be got to in other ways. The Satellite Technology Demonstration is, therefore, one example where there could have been developments in all four quadrants. We then have to consider what the motivation for using that "new" way (i.e., a new delivery system) was. Its use has to be justified because it can do it "better." It can do it "better," as we noted, because it can get to more people, more cheaply, more effectively, or to people who cannot be got to in any other way. Since in the case of the STD it was the latter motive, it could perhaps have demonstrated this capacity equally well, if not better, by using existing programming and educational materials and not by creating "new" courses and content. Then only one experimental variable would have changed, and it would have been easier to assess the unique contribution of the "new ways," i.e., the new technology.

A Multidimensional Matrix

To complete this analysis satisfactorily it would be necessary to develop a multidimensional matrix across a number of characteristics of learning systems, noting the "newness" or otherwise of the characteristics.

FIGURE 5 Learning characteristics

Learning characteristics	Existing	New
Institutions Students Learning materials Delivery systems Learning situations Credentialling Level Time-scale	24	

Even the categories we have already looked at require breaking down into further detail. It is, for example, worth looking at what constitutes "new students," since the question of "access" is preoccupying many people, educationalists and politicians alike.

New students can mean, as they do with the Open University, the completely unqualified, and the OU has shown that this is an important group in Britain. They can mean, for example, women. Far too few women are studying in higher education, and housewives returning to education and work are, in particular, a group about which many countries are concerned. They can mean other minority groups. These are particularly important in America, and may increasingly become so for European countries. They can mean mature students, and people who are studying part-time. They can mean the "second chance student": people who either want to start again or change stream, or people who have dropped out and want to re-enter. They can mean the "less able." Or indeed, they can simply mean "more." The question of whether more means "worse" or more means "different" is of course one which will be a source of continuing debate!

One important question for this study will be to determine what types of students choose to study through external degree programs and are able to do so successfully.

"New Ways"

"New ways" has been used in this paper so far as an umbrella term to cover a variety of aspects of learning systems. Some of the most important aspects have been noted, and programs need to be analysed in terms of their "newness"

for all of the subsets of these characteristics. Some are more significant than others, though the actual changes are often small, and do not add to the cost of the programs. An example of this is the relaxation of some of the more rigid campus attendance requirements which previously precluded participation by many housewives or working adults. Physical attendance at one given location for two or three nights a week over several years is a major limiting factor. New locations, either through home or work-based programs, are helpful to many. There are of course more extreme examples such as study on commuter trains.

Related to this is whether or not there is a fixed time for study. Some programs are limited to the daytime while others are geared to evenings or weekends, e.g., the Weekend College Program at Wayne State. Increasingly, universities are scheduling lectures from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., thus enabling working people to enroll as regular students. Some programs such as the Open University have no set time for study at all. Another critical aspect for adults is the length of time over which a course can be studied. Is there a time limit within which graduation must be achieved, and must the study be carried out on a continuous basis, or is it possible to have breaks in it to allow for unforseen pressures of domestic or working life?

Perhaps the most conspicuous changes arise with new delivery systems. Moving on from the face-to-face dialectic of the Oxbridge model to the mass face-to-face classroom lecture in itself opened up more opportunities. The new technologies of television, radio, closed-circuit broadcasting, videotape, and the use of satellite are enabling educational messages to be provided on a scale and

of a quality heretofore unknown for populations previously unable to receive them. And that old form of instruction, the written word, has with the systematic development of correspondence instruction become itself a new form, accessible to many more.

Very few programs are, of course, new in all of their characteristics. Most are new in some, but not in others. The critical point for the future will be to discover which of the new ways are most significant in affecting access to programs, and success in completion of programs. In addition it will be important to know whether any of the innovations are particularly helpful or particularly damaging with respect to the academic credibility of the programs and the success of their graduates in their subsequent lives and careers.

As Sam Phillips said in his introductory paper,[6] there has been an exponential growth in the utilization of independent off-campus study programs. It is important to know, and this study helps to make clearer, the reasons for this: the types of students choosing these programs, their motivations, and their degrees of success in achieving their goals. It is also important to look at these developments in context. Although numbers taking external degrees have been growing fast, they still form only a small proportion of nontraditional degree programs and an even smaller proportion of the total graduate population. The students differ less in their motivations than in the fact that they are already adults, often working and unable to participate in opportunities offered in the conventional way. They certainly want a degree of the same standard and of the same credibility as their younger counterparts.

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6. Phillips, op. cit.

In one sense what we are talking about is not new at all. The University of London was granted its charter in 1836, from William IV, and has since its foundation made its degrees available, with very few exceptions, to all who have satisfied its course and entrance requirements. One important limitation was removed in 1858 when the requirement of attendance at an approved institution was abolished. Maybe the results of this study will reinforce that lesson of 120 years ago.

If we had time, it would be important to characterize the programs which are the subject of today's study in terms of their newness. By studying the students' motivations and success, both in their studies and their lives, we should go some way to learning which are factors that are most critical in making programs accessible and successful both for students and institutions.

The phenomenon of adult learning is not going to go away. Adults after all form the majority group of the population and the concentration of educationalists on pedagogy at the expense of andragogy can not be allowed to continue. It is to be hoped that studies such as this one will contribute to the better understanding and planning of educational provision for all adults.

COMMENTARIES ON RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

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Carol Eliason, Director of the Center for Women's Opportunities, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges

Grover Andrews, Associate Executive Secretary, Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Joseph Zelan, Senior Social Scientist, Abt Associates

Ernest G. Palola

The results of the Bureau of Social Science Research (BSSR) study corroborate research studies conducted by Empire State College (ESC) on 300 of its graduates. Almost half the graduates sought more advanced training and professional education at the graduate level, which is comparable to the 57 percent figure in the BSSR study.

Additionally, three-fourths of the ESC graduates and 93 percent of the BSSR study graduates who applied to graduate schools were accepted.

For all graduates in the ESC study, 70 percent indicated that they intended to complete a master's, doctoral, or professional degree; in the BSSR study it was 63 percent. Almost all the ESC graduates reported that at the time of the survey they had changed jobs since enrolling at the college, which is essentially the same result found in the BSSR study. There were four important changes for the graduates of both the ESC and the BSSR studies: (1) increased professional status, (2) higher pay, (3) increased job responsibility, and (4) improved job satisfaction.

Other basic conclusions that may be drawn from the BSSR research are:

- people with the adult responsibilities of jobs and families find the external degree a legitimate way to consolidate and supplement earlier study experiences.
- the external degree seems to satisfy the expectations of its graduates very well.

K. Patricia Cross

I can't resist the temptation to compare our activity here today with that of a medical clinic in which the doctors, after studying all the clinical tests and charts, gather round to evaluate the health of the patient.

Initially, I conceived of this session as one in which trained specialists were flown in from all over the country to examine the charts of a patient with some extremely interesting and even exotic diseases. People weren't quite sure what, if anything, was wrong with the external degree. Who wouldn't welcome the opportunity to probe further to discuss symptoms and possible remedies with other specialists--possibly even to save a life with our expertise?

Imagine then my vague sense of disappointment when I poured over the extensive charts, only to discover that the patient was essentially normal in all respects. The external degree didn't have any exotic disease or even, as it turned out, any very ominous symptoms. It was neither undernourished nor overnourished, had been accepted as basically healthy by accrediting examiners, enjoyed reasonable acceptance by others, and was living a basically sound and apparently stress-free life. Aside from a hint that the patient was perhaps beyond its peak of growth, there was no evidence of any pathology. Basically our patient could be compared to a kind of middle-class guy making a modest place for himself in the world.

The basic conclusions of the research were these:

1. People with adult responsibilities of jobs and families find the external degree a legitimate way to consolidate and supplement earlier study experiences.

2. The degree satisfies the expectations of its graduates very well.

3. The external degree is adequately negotiable, seemingly credible in the eyes of the graduates themselves, their friends, employers, and educational institutions.

Thus, the answer to the fairly limited question addressed in this study is, Yes, the external degree seems to be sound as an educational credential for those

who attain it. Once we have answered that question (with appropriate caveats about the generalizability of the data), I would hope we could end our national obsession for asking if nontraditional forms of education are "as good as" more conventional models. Since I am not convinced that we should be all that satisfied with traditional education, I find research documenting the equality of external and conventional degrees incomplete at best, and in any event, a dead-end activity because it fails to lead to the improvement of either alternative.

Let me hasten to make it quite clear that I do not intend that remark to be a criticism of either the question addressed or the investigation carried out in the study under discussion today. Rather, my point is that the findings reported in this study, imperfect though they may be, are more important for the questions they permit us to raise than for the questions they purport to answer.

I'd like to ask the more impertinent research questions now like, How do we go about developing more mature, resourceful, lifelong learners? In view of the research of Allen Tough (1971) and others showing the unsuspected prevalence of self-directed learners in the society, maybe what we should be worrying about is not the acceptability of external study for adults but the dangers of making rather traditional classrooms increasingly accessible to adults. Will channeling adults into a system of predigested decisions about what, where, and when to learn rob adults of motivation and responsibility and narrow the dimensions of "legitimate" learning?

On the other hand, perhaps the dropouts from external degrees would have benefitted from the structure of conventional degrees. Most advocates of the Learning Society would probably support current trends to increase the options for adults learners, but shouldn't we know something about which forms work best for which learners? One way to research that question would be to look at the

dropouts from various alternatives. It would be interesting to know, for example, who dropped out and why from the external degree programs that form the basis for today's discussion.

At present most research on adult learners has a strong marketing flavor about it. We know quite a bit about the needs and interests of learners and would-be learners. We know very little about those who say they are not interested in further learning--and as fate would have it, non-participants tend to be those that society thinks most need education. What turns them off to learning opportunities?

Researchers Sosdian and Sharp suggest in their summary that an appropriate next step in research would be a study of the advantages and disadvantages of conventional adult education, i.e., evening and extension study. And of course, I agree. They go on to hypothesize that one of the advantages of on-campus study might be the opportunities for socialization and interaction. I rather suspect, however, that the social interaction aspect of on-campus study has been vastly overrated for most adults. Today's adults are usually making a quick trip once or twice a week to a large impersonal commuter campus where they listen and take notes in conventionally managed classrooms. If social interaction is important to learning, perhaps we should begin to worry about how to make it more effective both on and off campus.

Obviously, there are plenty of interesting questions to investigate. To me, the important message from the study of the external degree as credential is that the credential per se seems to be in good health -- and that means we can get on with the business of improving adult learning.

Penny Richardson

When I read the study, I came away with a lot of questions about why the programs that worked worked, what the problems the people had with them were, and what the implications were for people trying to develop new programs to meet the needs of learners better than they're currently being met. And, to me, the implications for further research were some of these.

For one thing -- I'm sure much of this qualitative kind of research was gathered, but that wasn't the focus of this study -- I would think that those of us in institutions that are trying to offer programs for adult learners would really appreciate some insight into the barriers that the institution faces, the problems of getting the program going, all the sort of personal dynamics of working with the various credentialing agencies, and so on. And I'm not talking so much about the statistical summary kind of information, but about the kind of almost diary or journalistic accounts, so that we have the institutional perspective.

A second set of information that I think we need is information on how an external degree program tries to relate to the other resources in the community. We know right now that there are a lot of needs for collaborative arrangements -- trade unions linking up with community colleges is one example -- so that people can get credit in places other than the local campus.

And then the third is the learners themselves. It seems to me that a very thorough account of a few individuals and their experiences is a way to get insight into individual and learning problems. And so I guess I just want to echo Pat Cross's statement that having addressed this set of questions and having answers to them, we can now proceed to some of the kinds of narrative, case study, qualitative accounts of the learners and their responses, of the

relationships of the programs to the other resources in the community, and of the ways an institution deals with the problems of offering programs to new learners, reassessing their mission, creating new structures, etc. And then we should take next steps into the future so that the three parts of the needs assessment -- learner, community, and institution -- are all available to people who want to build their own programs.

Carol Eliason

In 1976, with funds from the Carnegie Corporation, AACJC conducted a pioneer study on who the women were who turned to the two-year college for skills and credentials to enter or re-enter the labor force, with special emphasis on those who sought entry into nontraditional occupations. We found that 47 percent of the adult women who came to two-year colleges came for skills and credentials to immediately enter the labor force. We also found that 50 percent were already employed and that they came with high expectations that the college they were attending, whether one that was traditional or an external one, would provide them with all of the resources they needed to change something major about their lives. We further found that another 21 percent hoped to transfer to some other institution. We had to do away with some of our previously held myths. For example, we had previously thought that they would always go on to a four-year institution, either public or private. What we found out, in fact, was that women today are transferring to a far more diverse cycle of institutions, ranging from barber and beautician schools, to federally operated programs under CETA, to four-year institutions that offered them incentives to get credit for life experience, to colleges without walls, to other programs operated by federal and state licensure agencies. We also found

that we were serving a market that had been previously unexplored and which is still ill understood because we don't know as much as we need to know about the learning styles of adult learners. Many women stopped in and out of college four or five times and at different times in their lives. Large numbers of them came to us with a poor self-image, and they needed a helping hand in terms of a different model of counseling. One of the prime things that an external degree program does have the potential of offering is a different model of counseling. Dr. Cross has written about this as have others, that we still need to address the blockages that institutions and those that we serve present to the adult part-time learner, male and female.

For example, I suggest we need a better package of financial aid for the part-time learner. We need further research about where the gaps in services are, not just in counseling but in vocational testing. In the Carnegie study, less than 10 percent of the women had ever had any kind of vocational testing, good, bad, indifferent, sexist, ageist, racist, or not. We found that because of their lack of real awareness about the world of work and the diversity of occupations open to them, they often made curricula choices which were totally inappropriate and, thus, they stopped out of disillusionment or out of other frustrations. We found further that the women desperately needed to know about resources that existed in their community to deal with other personal problems, whether legal, psychological, or economic. I tie educational equity to economic equity: Until we do a better job of tying the world of work to the world of education in realistic fashion, we will lose more learners than we retain. I propose that we need to look at not only the recruitment but the retention practices of external degree programs so that we can better serve the adult part-time learner.

We also need to examine the kinds of coalitions that can be developed between traditional colleges and universities and the external degree programs. I was delighted to see this study completed and put out in the open rather than on a dusty shelf, because all of us need to communicate better with one another about practices so that all of us can do a better job in offering a helping hand to the adult part-time learner who stops in and stops out.

A second study which we have been conducting since last summer has five regionally disbursed hearings around the country on behalf of the National Advisory Council on Women's Programs of HEW, in which we had both institutions and agencies and women themselves tell us about the unmet needs of displaced homemakers, single parents, and women over 60. Overwhelmingly, we found that there were overlaps in the educational needs of these three groups of women which could well be met by an external degree program. However, we also found many artificial means of delivery of service and such blockages as time limits by which degree programs must be completed. There are still artificial regulations about payment in advance, and the anger and bitterness of those that we do not adequately serve is a real and viable one. Much more research needs to be done about it. The linkages of programs to CETA is another issue that we need to address, since major federal monies now do not go to HEW, but go to the Department of Labor. These are ill understood by the consumer and so we need, in this marketing maze period, to communicate better to our federal agencies what the frustrations are in delivering this service. We're beyond the bricks and mortar stage in adult postsecondary education, and if we're only here to stay in the real-estate business and keep the dorms filled, then we have misinterpreted what our role will be in the future. With the downturn

in veterans' enrollments, with the downturn in the birthrate, with the upturn in the number of women who economically must go into the labor market to keep the family together, with the added impact of one family in eight now being headed by a female, with the further thrust in the black community of one family in three being headed by a female, we have a massive job to do and the external degree programs can speed them along if we deal with the structural blockages that we still have built into many of our programs.

I urge you to take time to investigate and look at your own programs -- to be a missionary for institutional change -- before we ask the federal government for monies to straighten out our own houses. I would rather have us proact to our own problems than react to more federal regulations. I think that we need to deal with one further issue in terms of research, and that is, what are the relationships between currently exisiting external degree programs and 4-year programs? And how easy is it for a person to go from a 2-year external degree program to a 4-year degree program and what do we still need to know about the doctoral programs? Over and over again in my travels around the country in the last two and a half years, I find staff of two-year colleges terribly frustrated because we are not aware of the role stress that we put upon the adult part-time learner who is parent, employee, and student. And until we deal with those role stresses openly and recognize that they need a lot of tender loving care, we're not going to get to the basic research issues.

Grover Andrews

Let me outline my observations about what we have learned from the study that is relevant to the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) Project

on Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation of Nontraditional Education.

Nontraditional higher education in the COPA Project "include external degrees, campus-free institutions, competency-based instructional programs, modular curriculum design, multi-media instructional degree programs, learning contracts for degrees, off-campus programs, military base instruction, independent study programs and experiential learning, at all degree levels, and in private, proprietary, and public based institutions and organizations."

Drawing on the work of Dr. John Harris, one of the researchers in the COPA Study, let me identify fourteen specific basic impressions:

1. First, external degree programs, as defined by the BSSR study, represent only a part of the nontraditional higher education identified by accreditation commissions.

2. While these external degree programs may be the greatest educational departures from conventional forms and practices, they may not, strangely enough, be the ones of most uncertain quality.

3. Most of the students are in their middle years.

4. Compared with the total enrollment figures for American higher education, enrollments in external degree programs are negligible.

5. Most of these institutions are accredited.

6. Most use conventional grading approaches.

7. Most of the external degree programs have come into being in the 1970s.

8. The prime reasons people chose the external degree programs were they could go to school and work at the same time and get credit for prior learning.

9. Most of the programs are in the "softer" studies--social sciences and humanities.

10. The two most important reasons to the graduates for continuing their education was for the satisfaction of having the degree and to meet the require-

ments for entry into a higher degree program.

11. Graduates believe they gained most in personal achievement and self-satisfaction and in discovering and enjoying knowledge.

12. About one-half of the graduates believe their job circumstances have improved as a result of completing the external degree program.

13. More than half of the graduates applied for admission to a subsequent degree program, and nearly 90 percent of them were admitted and enrolled.

14. Only about 10 percent of these graduates perceived they had any unusual problems in applying for subsequent degree programs, and these problems did not seem serious on the whole.

What the Study Did Not do or Say

As the researchers have identified, the study was descriptive rather than evaluative. Such a study (evaluative) would be valuable. The study did not cover curriculum-related and instruction-related data, and a good case can be made for the importance of covering these issues, since they are directly related to the quality of an educational experience. The study did not address the issue of the students who begin but do not complete an external degree program. Also, the evidence in the study does not say that all institutions should rush out and begin such a degree program.

The implications for postsecondary education--conceptual as well as in application to external degrees and postsecondary education in general--are:

1. Learning - time/space constraints reinforces learning modes of a traditional nature

2. Learning Outcomes - the self-perception of the graduates of the external degrees in the study represent one way of measuring learning outcomes

3. Access - the data from the study indicate that the external degree serves those who normally are served and does not significantly reach those who have serious educational deficiencies

4. Quality, quality control, and accreditation - the study indicates a need for focus on outcomes vs. process (performance/achievement criteria/evaluation)

5. Attitudes - student = consumer
faculty = administration
organizations = associations = institutions

Critics are more concerned with boundary maintenance issues than with quality of programs and performance.

6. And most important the study helps to dispel some of the myths about nontraditional education:

- poor quality - second rate - fad - unaccredited
- poor students
- students' goals and objectives (personal satisfaction vs. practical considerations)
- value of the nontraditional degree
- utility of the nontraditional degree
- viability of nontraditional education
- costs - cost effective, not necessarily less costly!

It is rational and reasonable for the American adult population to expect, and to have access to, alternative forms of postsecondary and higher education of quality that will be useful:

- as a credential
- in achieving personal goals
- in employment and professional activities
- and as a stepping stone for further study

Joseph Zelan

I was asked to make some comparisons between graduates of the external degree program and traditional students. I was pleased to be asked even though it states in the opening of the study report that this comparison is impossible.

In the opening of the report the impossibility is stated, towards the end it is demonstrated. I commend those sections and everything in between to you. I had to make a decision about what kinds of traditional students to compare, and I picked up where the authors of the report left off in stating that what typifies these particular external degree programs is the fact that they are not classroom based and that an appropriate comparison group would be adult students similar to these external degree program students but who are in some form of traditional classroom based instruction. I therefore chose a program I knew quite well. The University of California a few years back started something it called the extended university, which was presented as an innovative set of experimental programs to serve adult, part-time students. Only in the University of California system could these programs have been considered innovative and experimental, since they were largely , but not totally, classroom-based programs of instruction taught by the regular faculty of the university using regular modes of evaluation. And, as I say, in spite of their location in California, they were quite traditional. Those of you who know the system know that the University of California is perhaps among our most conservative and traditional institutions. So I had a population of part-time, adult students enrolled in these traditional -- traditional nontraditional -- programs. I'll have to pass over the opportunity to describe the programs and the students in detail because of the exigencies of time. Let me just state that, as far as I could tell from the data I had access to and the data in the report, they are similar in a number of significant ways: age, employment status, income. One significant difference -- and I think we need to pay attention to this -- is that the students in the BSSR study are overwhelmingly male; the programs that I

looked at in the University of California system, and they were five different programs from five different campuses of the university, were about 53 percent female. I think we ought to remember that fact when we look at some of these findings, even if we are not able to state the significance of that at this point. Let me mention just a couple of dimensions, or salients, to make comparisons across because there isn't time to do everything. The principal reason for having chosen these particular kinds of programs is similar across the two groups. The predominant reason is the flexibility afforded by the programs. Now, in spite of the rather traditional modes of instruction employed in the extended university programs at the University of California as compared with traditional full-time residential programs, the programs were flexible in that they offered part-time study at times and occasionally at places convenient to the students, even though the modes of instruction were traditional. The ability to combine study and work was the most significant reason for enrolling in these nontraditional programs across both comparisons. The goals envisioned for enrollment, the reasons one wanted to achieve greater education were similar in both groups. They tended to be predominantly career-related goals. The report of these external degree programs and some of the remarks made previously stressed that further study was a major goal of the graduates of these external degree programs. I would hazard the guess that further study would be career-oriented, since advanced programs tend to be more career-oriented than earlier programs.

The students enrolled in the university programs saw the relationship of their studies to their work and to their occupational goals as direct, rather than indirect -- the acquisition of skills, the acquisition of credentials,

rather than the kind of confidence building that comes out of enrollment in such programs. I think by and large one can say that these more traditional students are very similar in their goals and in their achievements to the students in the external degree programs studied here, which corroborates much that has been said by the other speakers. What can we make of this?

My first reaction was that it is hardly surprising that we find little in the way of differences between nontraditional and traditional students when comparing their goals, their achievements, their satisfactions. I would maintain that this is not surprising because the difference between traditional and external degree programs, as viewed in the American context of higher education, is hardly greater than the differences we already find in our traditional programs of study. This is a very different kind of context from that which Naomi McIntosh described as existing in Great Britain. After all, when Eric Ashby, a British observer, produced his little book of observations on American higher education for the Carnegie Commission he titled it, Any Person, Any Study, which pretty much sums up the American approach to higher education, and many of you will have noted that that isn't an original phrase by Sir Eric. It is in fact drawn from the Morrill Landgrant Act of 1862, stating the purposes of that act. So I don't think there's any cause for surprise that traditional and nontraditional tend to coalesce in many ways. What seems to matter is not whether the program is traditional or nontraditional, whether it is campus-based or external, but rather whether it is structured in time and place so as to facilitate its use by the students who are constrained by time and by place. What matters is there is congruity between the goals of the students and the content of the program. That being my conclusion I'd like to point to some

further research that seems to be indicated here, and here I will echo Pat Cross's statements. We no longer need to dwell on issues of whether external degrees are different from traditional degrees, whether we have to worry about their acceptability and their negotiability. We have to get down to the business of asking about the business of our traditional and our nontraditional programs. Are they suited for the kinds of people they enroll and how can we best serve the kinds of people who do enroll in them?

Let me point to one finding in this study which I think is very significant and may point to some of the research that we need to do across these programs. The attainment of goals, whatever the goals, was pretty high among these students, but the intrinsic goals of education were more likely to be achieved than the extrinsic goals, in spite of the fact that these students were already in the world of work and were probably more able to achieve the extrinsic goals than our traditional students. I'd like to ask what that forebodes for our traditional students in this era of alleged greater career orientation and career content in our studies. I would hope that NIE has some intentions in that direction.

COMMENTARIES ON POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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American Society for Training and Development

Donald Nolan, Director of the Regents External
Degree Program, The University of the State of New
York, The State Education Department

Jerry Miller, Director, Division of Institutional
Relations, American Council on Education

Paul Katz, Chief, Standards Division
U. S. Civil Service Commission

David Sparks, Interim Vice President
Graduate Studies and Research, University of Maryland

John Vasconcellos, Assemblyman, California

Robert Craig

In my remarks, I will deal primarily with the employer survey part of the study. I think the findings of the employer survey are disturbing and I'm afraid confirm what I hear my colleagues saying about education-work relationships today. I don't think this bespeaks ill of external degrees. I think, in fact, I'm only a little disappointed that external degrees didn't come out better than traditional education in the comments we've heard here. But, if you look at the congruency of the findings on employers' reactions, it seems to me that employers are tending to put less and less value on formal education, which I think is a disappointment. The highest congruency said that employers were looking for things like work experience, things like personality, meeting the public, and maturity. Now, I'm not sure those questions were really phrased properly, but I would suggest, again based on what our members tell us, that what we're looking for more in the role of work is the ability to become a member of a team, to work in the work environment. There's a great deal of educational training going into the role of work in areas such as interpersonal relations, dealing with conflict resolution, communications, problem solving, decision making, and I think this is part of the gap, that we're not getting in the role of work. On the other hand, if you look at the lowest congruency, I think it tended to confirm that formal, traditional education did not rank very high. I think it's doubly bad in that most of the people in the study really had a career or job interest. In fact, the goals of entering an external degree program most frequently rated very or extremely important were career-related (77 percent, the highest grouping). I think we often do not look at what people are, at what their aspirations are. Much of it is economic or job-related. I think this leads to my next point.

And that is, I think education and work should get together to do a much better assessment of needs. I'd like to make one point about whether people, having gotten a degree, will get a salary increase. I should point out that in virtually every instance I know of, particularly where an employer pays tuition for an employee to go to school, they deliberately do not relate the educational achievement to a salary increase: they make no promises. The strong tendency an employer has is to give salary increases based on performance improvement, not on education. Sometimes I think people have aspirations and they don't know quite how to fulfill them, and I think this is another area where the role of work and education have to cooperate so that when somebody goes to school with a career-related objective they get the kind of education and training they can use. I have so many anecdotes about this. One of my members told me recently that we had to invent our own management training program. I love to send our people out to the local college, but when I do that, they are enrolled in management 101, circa 1910, and come back with training we can't use. Now, if we had good communication between that local college and a local industry, I think I'd be a much larger management-training market. Maybe I should also tell you that I've just seen a survey on management and supervisory training. All the surveys tend to be like this, but I happen to remember these particular data.

Who does supervisory and management training, what are the sources? In supervisory training, 75 percent of the companies studied had their own in-house program; only 6 percent used university development programs. I think this illustrates more of the education-work gap. I do think that the data from the employer survey tend to point up a very serious deficiency and that we need a much better education-work relationship.

Donald J. Nolan

My remarks will focus on the follow-up studies we have conducted in New York's Regents External Degree Program, by way of comparison with the BSSR study. I am pleased to report that the BSSR study confirms the findings of our local survey; not just because it's nice to know someone agrees with you once in a while, but especially because these findings are important to the future of all external degree programs. The BSSR study will make them widely known throughout the academic community. We are indebted to the Bureau of Social Science Research, the American Council on Education, and the National Institute of Education for this important report.

The Regents External Degree surveys that I will discuss today deal with graduates of our bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degree programs, and the graduates of our associate-level external degrees in nursing.

By and large, our studies show that Regents External Degree graduates have the same general characteristics exhibited by people in the BSSR study in terms of employment benefits and further academic study. In brief, our graduates are assisted in obtaining promotions and salary increases, and many more of our graduates than might be expected are pursuing further study. In particular, I want to point out that our graduates, as is the case with those in the study, overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with their nontraditional educational experience.

As you know, the Regents External Degree Program provides a way for individuals to obtain a college degree without necessarily attending college classes. Our degree requirements may be satisfied entirely by proficiency examination, either those we ourselves offer or those provided by other national testing agencies. Except for independent study we offer no instruction ourselves.

Most of our students also take courses from conventional colleges and universities, and a number of our people utilize educational experiences acquired through the United States military or through the training programs of business and industry.

The typical Regents External Degree student is middle-aged, employed full-time, and highly desirous of obtaining a college degree for economic reasons or for personal satisfaction. Since the program began in 1971, we have enrolled almost 24,000 individuals and we have graduated almost 7,000 in our two-year and four-year degrees in the arts and sciences, business, and nursing. Let me turn now to the follow-up studies of our graduates which we have conducted.

One of the more unexpected and gratifying findings of the BSSR study is the importance that external degree graduates attach to their degrees as a means of access to further education, including graduate study. It is unexpected, not because these degrees were necessarily viewed as terminal goals, but rather because some of us did not envisage them primarily as stopping-off places on the way to a graduate or professional degree.

The finding that eligibility for higher education ranked among the top three goals of students entering these nontraditional programs is borne out by a survey we conducted in April 1976. We surveyed the first 400 bachelor's degree graduates of the Regents External Degree Program. Ninety percent of these graduates earned their baccalaureates in the arts and sciences, while the remaining graduates received their degrees in Business Administration. Typical of external degree students, they met their degree requirements through various combinations of college courses, independent study and proficiency examinations,

courses offered by the military service, business, or industry, and special assessment of experiential learning. And as a group they were largely experienced, employed adults with family or other responsibilities, an important factor to recall when we assess their experience in seeking admission to graduate school.

Fully 70 percent of the 400 graduates responded to the survey. Slightly less than 50 percent of the respondents reported that they had been accepted to a graduate program. Their rate of acceptance to graduate school was about 85 percent. Seventy-six of these individuals said that they were actively involved in graduate programs at the time they were surveyed. Since a significant number of these individuals had just received their bachelor's degrees during the three-month period prior to the study, the actual proportion of alumni pursuing further education within one to two years of their graduation is probably higher than these figures suggest. The national study, with more graduates to choose from, was able to include only people who had been out of school long enough to allow them to make an effort to enroll in graduate school, seek a better job, or both.

The degree choices and study patterns revealed by the Regents External Degree survey are thoroughly consistent with what we know about adult students who have entered higher education by a nontraditional route. Fifty-eight percent of those working toward graduate or professional degrees were doing so on a part-time basis and, of course, the majority of undergraduate external degree students also study part-time. Similarly, their choices of fields reflected the same concern for practical applicability of a degree, a concern that is characteristic of external degree students as a group. Our graduates

report they are attending 60 degree programs at 57 different institutions throughout the United States. The areas of graduate study most frequently cited were business, education, management, and administration. Almost all the current graduate students had immediate degree goals at the master's level, although several of these also listed the doctorate as their long-range goal.

While the Regents graduate survey did not ask respondents to make subjective judgments of the usefulness of their external degrees in gaining entry to further study, the small number of negative experiences reported speaks for itself. In answer to the question, "Did you encounter any special problems in using your Regents External Degree to gain admission?", only eight of the respondents cited any obstacles that were related to the degree itself.

One obstacle encountered was a consequence of the still prevalent practice of requiring a grade point average for admission or financial aid. Our students make heavy use of proficiency examinations, which are often rated as pass/fail or assigned percentile rankings. Such grades are not calculated into a grade point average. As a result, candidates who earn a number of their credits by examinations on which they perform better than they have in regular coursework are penalized when their grade point averages are used as entrance criteria for graduate school. However, this problem is not unique to external degree programs, since many colleges offer the option of pass-fail grading.

Another problem cited by our graduates in utilizing their external degrees has to do with regional accreditation. When we conducted our study the Regents program held candidate status in the Middle States Association. Some graduate schools insisted on full regional accreditation, unaware that the Regents were recognized by the U.S. Commissioner of Education as a reliable accrediting

agency in their own right. The obstacle was removed in June 1977 when Middle States granted full accreditation to the Regents program.

While the BSSR study and our own survey approached the question of further degrees in very different ways, the message of both studies is clear: external degree programs have both encouraged adult students to pursue postgraduate study and provided them with the necessary credential to gain access to it. And these students have pursued further education in job-oriented areas. External degree programs, it seems clear, are increasing graduate school enrollments and, at the same time, helping to shape what is taught there.

Let me turn now to our surveys of graduates in the field of nursing. The BSSR study did not focus on the specific area of nursing, so comparisons are difficult. The Regents program, on the other hand, has three degrees in the field of nursing, and we are vitally concerned with our students in this area. Therefore, we have conducted annual follow-up studies of the people who earned either the Associate in Science or the Associate in Applied Science nursing degree from the Regents.

In these surveys, we sought information from the graduates and their supervisors regarding licensure, educational plans, salaries, job responsibilities, and job performance. The graduates are working in a wide variety of health care settings in over thirty states.

Our surveys have dealt with about 350 of our nursing graduates. Our typical nursing graduate, like the typical external degree graduate in the national survey, was white, about 36 years old, married, and with at least one child. On the other hand, more of our nursing grads were likely to be employed than were the women in the national study.

Both our nurse graduates and their supervisors clearly indicated that job performance of these nontraditional students was better than that of graduates from conventional two-year nursing programs. This response held true regardless of whether the questions related to overall technical nursing skills, knowledge of nursing, knowledge of basic sciences, or attitudes about their role as registered nurses. The graduates were completely accepted by co-workers as registered nurses, even though they had acquired their degree through an assessment program. Many of the graduates are now in management positions such as head nurse, director of inservice education, or team leader. They all received most favorable comments from superiors about their performance in leadership roles.

Some statistics from the surveys will illustrate the points I've just outlined. More than 90 percent of the supervisors rated the overall performance of REDP nursing graduates on the job as equal to or better than that of graduates from conventional associate degree programs. Again, 97 percent of the supervisors stated that the clinical skills of our graduates were equal or superior to those of typical associate degree college graduates. Almost the same percentage of supervisors said that the REDP graduates demonstrated the values and attitudes expected of the registered nurse in their work setting.

The survey results were just as impressive from the perspective of the nursing graduates themselves. Well over 90 percent of these graduates rate their overall job performance equal to or better than that of their colleagues who have graduated from two-year collegiate nursing programs.

Another point, outside the surveys I have been discussing, can be made about our nursing graduates. These graduates must take the same registered nurse licensure test that is administered to graduates of other nursing programs.

Viewed from this measure, our graduates consistently score well above the national and State averages for graduates of two-year, or even four-year, collegiate nursing programs. More than 90 percent of our graduates pass the registered nurse licensure examination on their first attempt.

This conference on the external degree marks only the beginning of what should prove to be a long and productive discussion of the BSSR study. It surely deserves continued analysis and discussion not only by people involved in external degree programs but also by the academic community at large. With respect to the Regents External Degree I hope to be able to build upon the study's data base by using the BSSR questionnaire in future surveys of our graduates. I have a feeling other external degree programs will also see the national study as a model for their own follow-up activities. I congratulate all who have been associated with the project and thank them for this landmark piece of research in nontraditional education.

Jerry Miller

I want to direct my comments to the general direction of future educational policy and practice as I see it developing, and as I see it being indicated by this study. It seems to me that this study is an indication that institutions are exercising their credentialing function of knowledge gained externally in a way that is largely acceptable to employers, certainly to the students involved in external degree programs, and even to a large number of graduate deans. Now, assuming that this is carried on in an institution that is accredited by a COPA-recognized agency, I have to assume, in the absence of better formal evidence, that it's being done with proper attention to academic standards. I think the impact of external degrees on postsecondary practice,

especially in terms of numbers of students affected, is not likely to be that great in the future. That is, I simply don't think there's going to be that many students around who are going to seek this type of educational alternative. But in terms of the philosophy that I think is represented by the external degree movement, I think that will have a terribly significant impact on post-secondary education. If institutions can properly credential external learning for the whole degree, they certainly can properly credential external learning for part of the degree. And, in my view, institutions are moving more and more in the direction of allowing students -- and maybe even encouraging students -- to meet part of the requirements for a degree through nontraditional means, independent study, media instruction, crediting the courses offered by business and industry, the military, etc. I think that's a highly desirable trend. I look forward to the day when a portion of the degree, a portion of the requirements for a degree, not only <u>can</u> be met through independent, self-directed learning at most institutions but <u>must</u> be met in this way. By imposing that type of requirement, institutions would really be doing their greatest service to students. They would be imbuing them, it seems to me, with a lasting competency, that of being a self-reliant, independent learner, one that's quickly adaptable to new situations that we all are going to have to encounter over a lifetime.

There's one concern that I have about the external degree movement that harkens back, I think, to what we did with extension courses, evening class programs, correspondence education. We have organizationally segregated them either into separate institutions or into components of institutions in a way that to me makes little educational sense. What we ought to be doing, I think

with the whole philosophy of independent external types of learning is integrating that into the whole curricula -- the traditional curricula -- in a way that students have at their disposal many modes of learning to satisfy whatever the requirements are for a credential. And I think if we tend to segregate organizationally within a traditional institution or as a matter of fact create too many special institutions of an external degree type, we may be running in a counter, nonproductive direction. I think we ought to be moving towards integration instead of this type of segregation. I think all of this suggests, if this is the road we're going to travel, a little bit of a change in roles for institutions.

I hope institutions will come to understand that they don't have to provide all the instruction and as a consequence over the next few years their role in instruction, while it still will be central to the academic enterprise, will certainly not be exclusive. I hope that institutions will come to expand their guidance and counseling functions in terms of helping all students, particularly adults, achieve whatever their educational and occupational objectives may be. I think if this is the direction that instruction and curricula can be greatly enriched by combining these various modes and places of learning into a program to meet the requirements for a particular degree. I'm for keeping external degrees, certainly as an alternative, a viable alternative, for adults. But I would like to extend its basic philosophy to all the programs of all institutions.

Paul A. Katz

Federal Civil Service is an experience based system where education is substitutable for experience (except in certain professional occupations). How

do we credit education?

First, education is generally accepted on a one-for-one basis -- one month on campus of relevant education is equal to one month's experience. Thus a baccalaureate, typically obtained over 4 years time (but in attendance for about 36 months) is considered equivalent to 3 years experience for most entry-level professional and administrative occupations. By this we mean entry at GS-5, where the majority of new college graduates without relevant experience enter.

Second, in crediting education, we rely on you, the education community -- as principally represented by accrediting bodies -- to tell us the value or equivalency of your courses and degrees.

As long as degrees and degree requirements remained traditional, we had no trouble in following your leadership. As you well know, however, there has now developed many nontraditional educational programs and attainment levels. We at the Civil Service Commission have tried, and I hope succeeded, in keeping up with you. But it is getting difficult as the number and type of accrediting bodies and educational programs grow. The last thing we, as a major employer, want to occur is for you to look to us as an arbiter on educational qualifications. Too often, recently, groups have come to us essentially saying: "If you will accept our educational program as equivalent to a related traditional one, then we will have 'status' and can parlay that status with others." We are typically torn between giving those persons our own independent evaluation, versus sending them back to you, the traditional educational community. When we do have such situations, though, we typically look to you for advice and then we fashion a solution which involves both the traditional

educational community and our own good professional judgment. But we certainly wish those issues didn't come up; that is, we would like you, the educational experts, to solve those issues before they surface with us. And I think you are doing that now with external degrees, and we thank you.

I would like though to give you an example of a problem we solved for ourselves using the State Board of Education for advice and guidance.

Formerly, when a candidate had a degree from a non-accredited college or university, we could not accept it unless, for example, the candidate obtained a report from a State University that they would accept that degree as qualifying for entry into their advanced degree program. This often required candidates to pay stiff application or matriculation fees to a university, even though they had no plans to enter that university. With a "simple" change to our policies--backed up by expensive and time-consuming research -- we now give direct and full value to non-accredited, oft-times external, degrees. The change we made was to stipulate that if the relevant State body (e.g. Board of Higher Education) recognized that degree as equivalent to similar degrees granted in its State by accredited institutions, we would accept that degree as qualifying, without further ado. Thus, a candidate for a Federal job -- with a nontraditional or non-accredited degree -- no longer has to pay an uninvolved third party, and wait for their answer, before trying to compete for a scarce Federal position.

Not all problems have been so handily solved. We are still getting expressions of concern from Federal agencies and professional organizations about the granting of scientific, engineering and health care degrees, without significant course work requirements in the concepts and principles basic to those fields. Simply put, these groups object to equating work experience as equal to course work in, for example, engineering, chemistry, mathematics, physics and biology.

We have come to agree with them. We therefore do not generally accept such work-experience degrees -- without additional course work -- as qualifying for the related professional occupations of, respectively, engineer, chemist, mathematician, physicist, and biologist. However, we do accept the baccalaureate itself -- without its stated major -- as fully qualifying for a very large number of other occupations which offer careers equivalent to those of professional occupations.

I'll close with what I am sure you have heard before from employers. Whatever the curriculums you establish or approve, they should be demonstrably related to the duties of the jobs for which you are preparing the students.

David S. Sparks

The invitation to join this panel included the suggestion that I speak for about ten minutes and that my remarks include an attempt to interpret the results of the study in the light of my own experiences and knowledge of external degree programs. I was happy to accept, for I have a special interest in the subject. In my role as a graduate dean, I am frequently asked how our admissions committees react to applicants who have earned external degrees. The question of the extension of the external degree to graduate departments and schools is debated both within and outside graduate schools.

I approach the subject of external degrees, therefore, more as a potential user of the information developed in this splendid study by Carol Sosdian and Laure Sharp rather than as a contributor to either the data or the thinking summarized in it. I am, however, very much interested in the outcome of this conference and of the continuing study of the interface between education and work which so many of those present have been examining for some time. While

I doubt that the graying of the University will move as fast, be as striking, or fill our emptying classrooms and laboratories as rapidly as many anticipate, I share the conviction that we must plan for a slow but steady rise in the average age of our students. The study before us helps us to better understand the needs, hopes, and expectations of a very small but significant portion of the continuing education spectrum that is prevented by circumstances from making a major commitment of time to the pursuit of a college degree in a campus classroom mode.

Before turning to the question of the policy implications of the results of the study permit me to express my appreciation to the authors of the study and to their sponsors. It is a tightly conceptualized, carefully structured, and splendidly written piece of work. The authors tell us much that we needed to know about the students who complete external degree programs, what the graduates expected from them, and the uses to which they put the resulting diplomas. It is an appropriate summary of one of the results of the long and persistent efforts of Samuel Gould, Patricia Cross, John R. Valley, and a host of others who worked through the Commission on Nontraditional Study, the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York to increase accessibility to both learning and to academic credentials for many who have been barred from both in the past.

With differing perspectives, each of us will attach significance to particular conclusions of the study. I was particularly struck, for example, by the high level of satisfaction expressed by graduates of the external degree programs and by the degree to which that satisfaction was tied to the successful completion of a self-imposed goal. I had anticipated, as had the authors, a more practical and economic view of the external degree.

Second, I was surprised at the small number of students enrolled in the programs in the fall of 1976. I am not sure what I expected the numbers to be but it was certainly much higher than the 54,000 reported by Sosdian and Sharp. It is, indeed, but a drop in the bucket when compared with the 11 million enrolled in the fall of 1975 and a very small drop in a very larger bucket if one adds the 14 million "adult education" students Harold Hodgkinson estimates currently engaged in some kind of postsecondary education outside of colleges and universities.

Third, it was reassuring to find that the graduates of EDP think of the experience as one that served as a refresher or stimulator, one that awakened them intellectually. I fear that far too many of our traditional students feel that their degree programs have done just the reverse, leaving them with appetites for intellectual activity and exchange dulled if not dead.

It is just here, however, in the area of comparisons that I find the study most disappointing. By design this is a study of those who succeeded -- those who have completed external degrees. It is not, and for reasons that may have been unavoidable could not have been, a study of the full spectrum of those enrolled in external degree programs. The consequence is a grave distortion of the world of the EDP. What happened to those who enrolled but never completed a degree program? What led those who dropped out to do so? Was too much promised for too small an investment of time and energy by the individual student? Or, conversely, do we find that either the student or the institution is being asked to invest far more than the other in this mutual effort?

Until and unless we find ways to examine the broader EDP population, we will have an excessively optimistic view of the entire enterprise. There were times

while reading this study that I longed to hear what a disappointed student might have said. I know too well the kind of distortion we would introduce into our studies of our own efforts in traditional education if we ignored attrition rates, the drop-out, and other evidences of mismatches between student expectations and institutional goals.

In a closely related comment permit me to enter a small protest against the final conclusion of the portion of the study devoted to the external degree as a credential. It is to be found in the last paragraph and states, you will recall, that "it seems clear that credentialing benefits can accrue to individual external degree program graduates." It then goes on to claim that: "On this basis, these programs should be considered as legitimate educational alternatives by prospective students, their sponsors and educators." Nonsense! This is not a study of <u>educational</u> alternatives. It purposefully avoids all discussion of the educational content of the external degree. It is, rather, a study -- and a good one -- of the utility of an academic credential. It deals with "negotiability" and "acceptability" which may, and which may not, provide evidence of educational achievement. Certainly the study itself provides ample evidence of the lack of interest by employers in the specific educational content of the external degree. Nor am I persuaded that acceptance for further academic study is, by itself, evidence that the EDP serves as a "legitimate educational alternative."

My central concern is one shared by all of us who seek to know whether the student we graduate has been significantly changed or enriched by his experiences while with us. Put another way, is the success he or she achieved a result of our admissions policies or of our curriculum and the faculty who teach it? It is a very difficult question and I do not fault our two investigators for choosing not to tackle it. I do fault them for making unwarranted claims about

the educational efficacy of EDP's when they have not examined the educational content of them.

Turning, in conclusion, to the special interests of a graduate dean in the implications of the external degree they naturally center on two areas. The first is the area of admissions to graduate study by holders of external degrees. The second is the question of whether the external degree model would be appropriate at the level of a first-professional or master's level degree program.

The study indicates that external degree holders have experienced some difficulty in gaining admission to highly selective graduate schools or programs, but little in obtaining offers of admission to moderately selective ones. This does not surprise me, nor should it you. Cynics have long accused graduate schools of both low and moderate selectivity of approaching the goal of "open admissions." While the charge may be dismissed as a base canard by old time elitists, all graduate deans deal with departments that advise the acceptance of 70 percent, 80 percent, or even 90 percent of those applying. And, I hasten to add, I frequently endorse just such admissions recommendations, particularly in those fields in which external degree students so frequently earn degrees -- the applied social sciences or the human services. I do so because of the academic goals of the departments in those fields, the pre-application screening they have conducted, and because we have had under-utilized resources in those area at my institution. A student seeking admission to a field in which resources are already stretched, or to one of the fields where the knowledge and skills to be learned are sequential and/or highly structured (as in mathematics, the biological or physical sciences, engineering,

or law) is apt to meet very great difficulty in winning admission, even in moderately selective institutions. It would be unwise to convey any other impression.

Finally, the question of the potential for the external degree at the first-professional or master's level remains to be addressed. Here I can be quite brief. I do not believe that the external degree model described in the study, one that requires that less than 25 percent of the required work be in the form of campus-based, classroom instruction, can be adapted to the needs of quality graduate education. And certainly one that grants credit for prior experiential learning would be unacceptable to the great majority of graduate departments and schools.

Present statements on the recognition and transferability of graduate credit, particularly that of the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States, emphasize the "absolute necessity for high level interaction between qualified graduate faculty and qualified students in a supportive environment as the sine qua non for the awarding of graduate credit." Further, the Council of Graduate Schools deans advise against the granting of graduate credit for "experiential learning which occurs prior to the student's matriculation" in a graduate degree program.

I do not see the results of study providing the basis for a change in these CGS policies. On the other hand, graduate schools have long been leaders in providing flexibility in the times and places of formal study as well as the validation of the successful completion of such learning through comprehensive examinations, standardized tests, and similar evaluations. Thus, there may be some room for accommodation of some of the goals of the external degree program

even if the degree of "externalness" is substantially below the standard used by the authors of the very fine study before us.

John Vasconcellos

It seems to me upon listening to the presentations and reading the study that it's no longer a question of whether we have these programs, it's only a question of how we provide them, how we move towards implementing them. Having said that, I think the major policy implication for me as a legislator is the question of quality. And it probably isn't good enough for me or for others to say that external degree programs are as good as traditional programs. In my experience personally in my education and in my observations now for ten years of higher education in California, I'm not satisfied that we are sufficiently and adequately providing quality education for any person, internal or external. The charge the higher education community, including those of us in legislatures who work with you, needs most to focus upon is to assure that persons who pursue education at whatever level or whatever place or process after high school obtain the kinds of experiences that truly enable them to realize their entire human potential. And I think that the public policy question needs to be seen broadly in that sense. For me, at least, that is perhaps the major public policy issue of this society at this time: the effort to shift from institutionalization as the way of life to individualization as the way of life. For the past 15 years we have seen enormous anguish and pain and struggles and violence by persons, on account of persons, individually and in groups. We all seek to establish our own legitimacy, our own validity, our own natural wisdom, our own value. And whether it's liberation, black or brown or women's or gay or gray or kid's, or whether it's human potential movements or sexual revolutions or spiritual awakenings or whatever else, I think we are really seeing in this society a remarkable effort, an unprecendented effort, to shift the bias of life and relationships from people fitting institutions -- and being fitted and sized and edited and conformed and made uniform

so that somehow the machine marches along indiscriminately -- to an effort to redefine ourselves and our nature and potential and our needs and desires and affects and hopes and fears such that institutions are seen as existing only for the purpose of meeting the needs of individuals. Someone said this morning in commenting on the research implications, "start with the learner." And that seems to me so obvious that it almost ought not have to be said. But in my experience it needs to be said time and time and time again. I think that this study is valuable simply because it validates one more piece of a growing effort to redefine institutions to be less authoritarian and less distant and less remote and less abstract and less ivory-towerish, if you will. That their functioning and their roles and their justifications for existence policy-wise, public policy-wise, are solely in terms of serving the public and that that requires two things: it requires a recognition of what this society is doing and who its people are -- who our people are -- and a recognition of the radically changing and emerging individual and societal needs. Institutions must be well aware of more than just the faddish kinds of flips and flops that people undertake and engage in. We truly need to recognize that we're no longer the society that we were fifteen years ago, much less a hundred, and that we have people of varying consciousness and varying values and visions and experiences and life styles and race and color and sexual inclination and creed attempting to forge meaning in their lives and much more -- whole ways of living and relating, working and learning, being healthy and making sense of lives. I think that this study is one more piece which says let's have institutions that fit individuals. The policy implications, it seems to me, are fairly evident. We ought to begin taking ourselves past the structural and

mechanical, and I think really outmoded, arguments about here or there, and whether externally or internally, and truly begin to address emotionally and personally and intimately the issues of how in fact we can provide for people in ways that truly enable them to recognize and realize their entire potential as human beings to learn and grow and make their contributions in our society.

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Francis U. Macy
Executive Director
National Center for Educational Brokering

We are reminded by John Vasconcellos that we all perceive everything in different ways since each of us is so profoundly individual. Therefore, we are going to perceive this conference in individual ways and, hopefully, it has been a learning experience for each of us. It occurred to me that Naomi McIntosh's organizing framework has helped us to think about the conference itself as well as the larger educational scene. When I first looked at the program, my reaction was: it's impossible, it won't work. Why? Because each of the presentors only had ten minutes and I thought no one can say anything of substance in that amount of time. But each person did say something substantial in about eight to ten minutes as might have been said in most fifty-minute lectures. So, in thinking about ourselves as educators today and looking at the McIntosh matrix, I moved to the bottom right quadrant of the matrix and wrote down New Educators and New Ways. And then it occurred to me after listening to John Vasconcellos that maybe what we're actually talking about are new people and maybe that's the way we're feeling. We're feeling that we're coming freshly to the 1980's as new people. In fact, I think I heard John saying that. You know, keep "becoming" as a person and educator, or whoever you are, and that almost will inevitably result in new ways of thinking and talking. I felt that some of that was certainly going on today. Some of it, too, was in the very economy of the way we were dealing with each other, including some bluntness which was rather refreshing compared to some of the scholarly meetings we've all been in. There was also a concern expressed

about meeting the needs of the individual learner that was different from other meetings which I have attended.

I would like now to sketch out the major themes of the conference as I perceive them. There was very little criticism of the researchers and, in fact, there were many positive words for Carol Sosdian and Laure Sharp. There was, however, regret about the perimeters within which they were required to operate by the terms of the contract grant. It was notable that the results of the study were strongly supported by independent studies done by people with programs that have graduated many students.

There was general agreement that the degree outcomes in terms of acceptability and negotiability looked very good indeed, as did student satisfaction. But what about the learning outcomes? There certainly was a strong feeling that we haven't looked at the learning outcomes of the EDP's and that could well be a part of a future research agenda. Also, there was a lot of interest in the attrition, retention, stop-out, stop-in set of issues. Some people felt that this was a major gap in the study, because it only looked at those who have successfully completed degree programs. Others felt that the very notion of dropping out was imposing our values of achieving a degree on students for whom that may not be their main objective. But, in any case, there seemed to be the feeling that more research as Empire State has done on the people who have not completed degree programs would yield some useful insights into the programs. We were urged in fact to go beyond that and to look more at the people who have applied for but who have not embarked on those programs. Those are the consumers that were turned away for one reason or another. It was also said that there ought to be better comparison between campus and off-campus

learning experiences for adults and for others as well an area of further research. Another defined research need is the relationship of EDPs to various transitions -- the transition from two-year to four-year institutions and from a bachelor's to a graduate program. Don Nolan pointed out that they hadn't expected that so many of their graduates would be moving on to graduate programs. Everyone, I think, has been impressed with the degree of acceptance of those who did apply but more ought to be looked at, particularly with regard to the problems of grade point averages and the whole transcript problem of that articulation. There was a good deal of discussion on the issue of EDPs and their relationship to the world of work. EDP students by and large remain in the world of work. Some EDP programs make use of that fact, while others seem to ignore it. This issue deserves more research. An important suggestion was that you who are running EDP programs can do much of this needed research yourself. Don Nolan said that he plans to use the BSSR instruments and suggested others to do so as well. He also urged people to disseminate the current report and add data to it so that this would be an ongoing data bank and could be an "alive" study from that point of view. Now, the striking thing was that our energies really went beyond the EDPs rather rapidly. There seemed to be a strong sense that the EDPs meet the time and space needs of adults that Naomi McIntosh urged us to consider and that the doctors at Pat Cross's medical consultation have given EDPs a very clean bill of health. However I sense that there are people who still have battles to fight in their own institutions, in their own communities, and with accrediting agencies so that more people need to be convinced of the health of EDPs. Perhaps there ought to be more discussions of effective dissemination of the results of this and other related studies. But then we came on quite hard feeling that we would be making a

mistake by comparing any outcomes, learning or degree of EDP's with on-campus degree programs pursued through classroom study mainly by full-time young students. Pat Cross introduced this note and many others resonated on it, so that we really focused on the educational enterprise as a whole not just for adults and not just EDP's. While we were using a wider lens to look at the whole field, John Vasconcellos asked us to also use a microscope and look inside ourselves to where the changes need to start. Others also stressed that probably the biggest problems are attitudinal. Attitudes toward ourselves as educators, toward students and towards the institutions. Much of our behavior is institutionally oriented and we will need to examine this carefully if we're going to make education more humanistic and more individualized for those we are attempting to serve. There was a strong feeling that we need to direct ourselves to our own learning needs as well as to the learning of those we are working with, the people we call students. Pat Cross said we should help people develop themselves as self-initiated learners. She raised the danger that increasing accessibility of rather traditional classroom education to individuals could suffocate their skills in becoming self-initiated learners. To counter this danger, Jerry Miller called on the entire educational apparatus to create a different orchestration, a different mix of learning modes. This, it seems to me, would create a different concept of the role of student and the role of teacher. I personally feel that many of you in the external degree movement, and it really is a movement, are in fact doing that and are even using new language -- "mentors," "facilitators," "university without walls". You are creating not only new lables but new role relationships which heavily influence the exploratory learning process. I sensed a real type of bubbling

up here today and a feeling that we now need to move on and become more concerned about the process of learning which I think John Vasconcellos is saying is the process of being. And I was interested that the most philosophical breadth of focus came from one of the few non-educators, John Vasconcellos, whom I would say maybe is a new educator in the fourth quadrant in the matrix. In closing, I would like to compliment not only the researchers on this project, who have received high accolades, but also those from ACE, BSSR, and NIE who convened us here. I think this has been an unusual convening, in that we've lifted our sights rather than narrowed them and we've looked at individuals rather than institutions -- I compliment you all as well as the conveners.